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Consider the Bass Drum

IN THE first place, it is hollow; it contains nothing but air. It makes a tremendous noise, but it never gets anywhere. And it doesn't even make a noise unless some outside force compels it to.

When you hear the boom, boom, of the big bass drum, if you were not acquainted with it, you would say: "There is something that is accomplishing a great deal. Listen to the noise it makes!"

Boom! Boom! Boom! The bass drum is making a lot of noise again. Let us see which one it is.

A great many people are like the bass drum. You know them well. You met one today. He is full of air. He makes a great noise; sometimes he nearly deafens you with his booming, but in the end what does it all amount to?

The political big bass drum: He tells you that the country is going to the dogs because his party is not in power at the present time. If he had his way he would show the world how to adjust things. There wouldn't be any more strikes, for every one would get a fair deal. The scale of wages would go up, and the cost of living would come down. As now carried on, things are a disgrace. If he were President everything would be different. Boom! Boom! Boom! The big bass drum is making a noise again.

Then there is the business bass drum. He button-holes you in the street, possibly when you are on your way to keep an important engagement. He tells you that your way of doing things is all wrong; your sales method is askew; your manner of advertising doesn't pull. He shouts and waves his hands, and says if you will only listen to him, and how he does things, it will mean money in your pocket. You go back to the office feeling that, perhaps, what he says is true, and you are a failure. Then you look the man up in Bradstreets and find that he is rated at fifty thousand less than you are, and you feel better. Boom! Boom! Boom! The bass drum is making a noise again.

Perhaps you are vain enough to want to be a social leader in the town where you live. If you could only be like Mr. Bass Drum, the slick man of the place, you would be perfectly happy. He tells you the price he paid for his house a year ago; that he wintered in Florida, and summered in Maine; that he has just bought a new car for several thousand dollars, and that his daughter is engaged to the Count de Wind. Don't mind him. He makes a tremendous noise, but if you knew the real inwardness of things, you would not envy him. You are far better off than he is.

The world today is full of big bass drums. Their booming is deafening. It shuts out the music of laughing children and singing maidens. On account of the noise of the big bass drums you cannot hear the sweet melody of life, which should fill your soul, and keep you content through all the trials that may come.

But don't be discouraged. Remember that if you beat a bass drum hard enough, it will burst, and forever after there will be peace and quiet.

We wouldn't like to start anything, but "a word to the wise—"

Uncle Sam After Car Thieves

THIS summer will see the first real test of the Dyer Act, the Federal law designed to stop the stealing of automobiles. It penalizes the interstate shipment of stolen cars, and adds another link to the chains that are supposed to bind cars to the owners.

Most stolen cars, especially the more expensive ones, are not stolen in the legal sense. They are taken by some one who wishes to go joy riding, are driven until the gasoline in the tank is gone or they are wrecked, and then abandoned. It is in the lighter, more popular

cars whose large numbers prevent easy identification that theft has become a scientific business.

The effort to combat this traffic with state laws has not proved an entire success, because it is easy to drive the stolen car a long distance from the place where it was taken, change motor numbers by the processes the thieves have devised, and sell the car—possibly to a legitimate dealer in used cars.

With Federal intervention, this becomes dangerous. Even joy riders, who cross state lines, face the rigorous Federal courts and the effective government investigators. Recent sentences have been as heavy as three years in prison, and the practice of Federal judges of giving heavy sentences is not likely to make the road smooth for malefactors.

Summer is the gala time for the automobile thieves, and on the reduction in thefts of cars and the number of thieves safely housed behind bars depends the decision on whether the Dyer Act is sufficient, or whether other measures are needed to down the illicit business.

Anyhow, it is a good idea to lock your car.

We Have With Us—

WITH the return of the world to more normal conditions, the dear old friend, the Spanish Prisoner swindle, comes to life. It is so aged and time-worn that one wonders if any one is caught by it, if the promoters ever make their stationery and postage money out of it, or whether they take their reward in golden dreams of a golden dupe.

It has variants, but always the proposed victim receives a letter from a man in a Spanish prison, and always there is a hidden fortune of which he is offered half if he will come to Spain and get it, and by this means free the prisoner. In the few recorded cases in which some one has bitten, the man has been scientifically robbed, sometimes of large sums.

These curiously hopeful Spaniards believe in fairies, and they appeal successfully only to their own kind. They sow their letters broadcast, hoping one will find lodgment with a man whose mind is fertile ground, who will be lured by the glitter of Spanish gold. They shame the sordid profiteer who adventures coldly in food and clothing and gives no thought to the last shreds of romance.

Take the Guns Away

ARMENIA has long taken Ireland's place in the world as "the most distressful country." The confused, conflicting reports from the Near East are enough to show terror, suffering, massacre and disease. Pleas for American help are constant; foreign statesmen upbraid the United States for not accepting a mandate.

What is not usually made clear is that Armenia does not really exist, even on paper. Nobody has marked out surely on the map any place and said, "This is Armenia." The great district in Asia Minor, in parts of which the Armenians are the predominant people, in more of which they are a large racial minority, is not even suggested as its territory.

It is the battle-ground of commercial conflict between the British traders and the French bankers, translated on the spot into blood and fire. Spheres of influence are dimly marked. They are occupied by troops—French or British—which sometimes side with the local Armenians, sometimes with the Turkish Nationalist forces of Mustapha Kemal. In places the Armenians are armed and organized; at others they are disarmed.

Jealousies are fanned, fears excited, fighting breaks out. The troops withdraw or are defeated, or perhaps, with Armenian aid, they win a temporary victory. In any event the Armenians suffer, the whole peaceable population suffers. The end is a long way off and America, despite plaints and hard words, can do nothing as long as British traders and French bankers are permitted to play with guns.

If you doubt that men and women are but adult children, watch them giggle at a slap-stick movie.

Still waters run deep, but the babbling shallow waters have more written about them.

When you make a slave instead of a servant of money, your troubles begin.

The successful merchant knows that he depends upon his customers.

Age in the arithmetic of genius is an unknown quantity.

Get into good company and you'll soon belong there.

Quit Passing the Buck

IT IS now acknowledged as the great American game, this "passing the buck." The philosophy of it is: Get rid of trouble by shoving it on someone else; get rid of the responsibility by pushing it on someone else; evade the blame by steering it toward someone else. The capitalist, the labor union, the Government, the educator—everybody—is doing it. That is the one reason why the United States is whirling round and round in a mad maze—the buck is being passed around; it is a whirling game of tag.

The inevitable end of such games is that presently the players drop from sheer dizziness. Swifter and swifter swings the game of evasion, the "buck" goes round at lightning speed, but when the gay passers are prone on the ground holding their wheeling heads, there is the "buck" still in the midst of them, challenging them all.

The game has endless variety. Lay a war tax on a product, and that tax is passed from one to another, and still another and another, until it lands upon the shoulders of the man who can pass it no further—perhaps we ought to say "who once could pass it no further." For he has now found a way. He cannot pass it farther, but he can pass it back! And he has passed it back, in the form of increased wage demands. And then it has been passed back to him in the form of increased prices. And he has passed it back again in the shape of still higher wage demands. And back it has come, a little larger this time, in still higher prices. And again he has passed it back; and again it has been thrown back at him; and the play has become faster and faster until the players are losing both their breath and the count.

That is the game. But there is also the blame of the game. The blame is the "buck" now. It was exciting at first and everyone strove for the lead. Now that it has become clear that no one can have the lead, the players want it stopped. But the momentum is too great. It cannot stop. And everyone is blaming everyone else for starting it. There has been found one man who is willing to stop. Curiously enough he is a workingman. He writes: "If you don't know where to begin, then hit me first! Only last week my foreman notified me that I would get a substantial raise in my next pay. I did not ask for it and I don't want it, and I appeal to 'the powers that be' to call it off." This man sees that before the game can stop, some of the players must stop. He is willing to be the first.

"Passing the buck" is more evident in the efforts to place the blame than anywhere else. The unions place it on the capitalists and the capitalists on the unions, while the officials of the government who are not anxious to antagonize either the capitalists or the unionists play what they think to be the safer game of placing it on the "Reds." The Government's diagnosis would be much more convincing if it acted as if it believed it, for the "Reds" are comparatively few and the Government has power to deal with them. Indeed, the Government has dealt with them after a fashion that has not been too much to the credit of Americanism and with no affect upon the situation at all.

Common-sense ought to teach all parties that, whether they be saloon passengers or steerage passengers, the safety of all is dependent upon the integrity of the ship. If the steerage goes down the decks will go too; and if the ship plunges the decks beneath the wages the steerage also is lost. Perhaps a better figure is that of captain and crew—the managers of the ship and those who man the ship have the same interest, as far as the staunchness of the ship is concerned. We cannot all be in the wheelhouse, else the fires will go out; we cannot all be in the stokehole, else the ship will not be safely steered. If the game has been for the wheelhouse and stokehole to buck each other, the way to stop the game is to stop the bucking.

In this matter the principal responsibility rests with those who have the widest margin in which to turn round. People who are living up to and beyond the last cent have no margin in which to turn round. While it is true that none of the players can step out of the game without loss, there are some who cannot step out without being ruined. Others who can stand the loss that must ensue, should be the first to stop, and by their act ease down the wild momentum of the plunge, in the interests of the others. There must be sacrifice, but it will not be useless sacrifice; it will repay heavily in dividends of re-established peace and prosperity.